

L1 for social presence in videoconferencing: A social semiotic account

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Abstract

Examining the use of multimodal translingual practices of language learners is a promising area for the study of semiotic resources in online multimodal language learning. As such, although L1 use is theoretically established as one of the many semiotic resources to be drawn upon for meaning-making as part of learners' integrated repertoire, its role as a catalyst for the establishment of social presence is under-theorised. This paper presents detailed micro-analyses of the videoconferencing interactions of three pairs of language learners, and offers a social semiotic account illustrating transformative processes of transformation, transduction and mimesis (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). This study makes a unique contribution by demonstrating how translingual practice is mobilised with concomitant multimodal resources, and how this social-semiotic practice interweaves with all three dimensions of social presence (affective, interactive, and cohesive). It proposes that as a contributing factor to social presence, L1 use can assume a more prominent role in support for online language learning and teaching by helping learners project themselves socially and emotionally into their online interactions, and engage in a variety of transformative processes offering various learning potentials.

Keywords: L1, Social Presence, Videoconferencing, Translanguaging

Language(s) Learned in This Study: English

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Introduction

Multimodal computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools, such as desktop videoconferencing, offer various opportunities for language learning and teaching within multi- and translingual landscapes. Previous research has explored semiotic resources in videoconferencing (Hampel, 2006; Lamy, 2012), and the semio-pedagogical competencies of teachers (Guichon & Cohen, 2016). Yet, there is a paucity of research on translingual practices in online language learning and teaching settings (Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017).

Towards the end of the 20th century, much emphasis on the communicative approach had led to a rejection of L1 use in language teaching to ensure maximum exposure to the target language. However, recent studies have acknowledged L1 as “our most formidable cognitive resource” (Swain & Lapkin, 2005: 81) and a “valuable pedagogical tool” (Llurda, 2004: 317). Moreover, the idea of language as social semiotic practice (Kramsch, 2000) in a complex landscape of translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013) in bilingual and multilingual communities has drawn attention to translanguaging (García, 2009; Wei, 2011). Within this approach, multilingual speakers make meaning by drawing on all available semiotic resources within their repertoire, such as L1, L2, L3 etc., but also gestures, gaze, intonation, and pictures. Wei (2011) demonstrated how sound, written text, use of Chinese characters, and gestures (finger spelling in the air) work together with L1 use in a multilingual classroom. Wei (2011) called for further studies investigating multimodal aspects of L1 use, which has been reiterated by Üstünel (2016).

In online language learning, lack of physical immediacy can present challenges in sustaining online

participation and interaction. One way to overcome this challenge is to promote social presence (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 1999). Social presence is important in the establishment of personal relationships within the online learning setting and is a catalyst for participation, community building, and collaboration (Walker, 2017a). Previous research in multilingual online communication has demonstrated a preference for L1 to express highly personal content (Huang, 2004), to continue online interactions by avoiding communication breakdowns (Kötter, 2003), to deal with the face-threatening act of corrective feedback (Tudini, 2016), to build a community (Walker, 2017b), and to establish solidarity as well as to model intercultural sensitivity (Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez, 2018). These functions indicate a role for L1 in the establishment and maintenance of social presence, which has only recently started to attract attention (Satar, 2015; Walker, 2017a). The present study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the role of L1 in interactions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to establish and maintain social presence in videoconferencing. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are multimodal resources (gaze, gestures, and artefacts) co-deployed during L1 use?
2. What is the role of L1 use in establishing and maintaining social presence in videoconferencing?

This study makes a unique contribution to the field by offering a social-semiotic account of L1 use in language learner interactions via videoconferencing (1) with a focus on the learners' transformative engagement with meaning drawing on their *integrated repertoire* through co-deployment of available semiotic resources, and (2) with regard to the contribution of L1 use to the establishment and maintenance of social presence in the multimodal online environment.

Literature Review

Language and Language Learning as a Multimodal Social Semiotic Practice

A social semiotic perspective to language positions it “on the universe of signs in which it is embedded” (Kramsch, 2000: 322). Language, in this sense, is one of the, and not necessarily the most important, available means for meaning-making. A social semiotic approach (Bezemer & Kress, 2016) assumes three characteristics of a sign: (a) that the sign is *motivated*, or reflects the interests of the sign-maker, (b) that the environment within which it is made shapes the sign, as the environment determines the available range of semiotic modes, which have different meaning potentials and social effects, and (c) that the sign-maker chooses the modes in the environment that are deemed *apt* to express the intended meaning within the cultural, social, historical, and geographical landscape.

A multimodal social semiotic understanding of language and language learning engages with several concepts, such as semiotic resources, modes, modal affordances, multimodal ensembles, mimesis, transformation, transduction and transformative engagement (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). *Semiotic resource* refers to “a community’s [material and immaterial] means for making meaning,” which are selected based on their perceived fitness as the best available resource; a “*mode* is a *socially organised* set of semiotic resources” (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O’Halloran, 2016: 71, emphasis in original). Speech, writing, gesture, posture, spatial positioning, and imagery are examples of modes, and they “always appear in combination—in *ensembles*: of image, writing and layout, for instance” (Bezemer & Kress, 2016: 7, emphasis in original). The social semiotic approach to multimodality assumes that each mode offers distinct meaning potentials that serve a particular community, which are called *modal affordances* (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O’Halloran, 2016).

Social semiotics views learning as transformative engagement with signs (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). *Transformative engagement* with modes offers distinct routes to learning within processes of *mimesis* (creative imitation or re-enactment), *transformation* (semiotic change within the same mode including translation from one language to the other), and *transduction* (semiotic change across modes) (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). Transformation involves the use of different affordances of the same mode, such as translating an English poem into French, or changing its genre (e.g. expressing it in prose); transduction, on the other hand, refers to inter-modal change (e.g. drawing an image to represent the meaning of a poem). Kress’s

(2003) earlier exploration of these terms were contextualised within an approach to literacy in new media as mechanisms of synaesthesia (described by Kress (2003: 36) as the realm in which “much of what we regard as ‘creativity’ happens”). Nelson (2006) presented an excellent application of this earlier conceptualisation to analyse L2 learners’ creation of multimodal digital stories. While both transformation and transduction as processes of synaesthesia evidence creation of new forms of meaning, in his later work with Bezemer, Kress approaches these terms as processes of learning and communication (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). They propose that if learners are given a range of modes and resources in the learning environment to engage with transformative meaning-making, they will have wider opportunities for learning because “every mode offers its own distinct route to learning” (p. 61). This semiotic approach to learning differs from the psycholinguistic theories of learning in that the focus is not on what is not learned (i.e. gaps in learners’ interlanguage development; Swain & Lapkin, 1995), but on what is learned. The transformative engagement with signs is accepted as evidence for learning processes.

L1 Use, Code-switching, and Translanguaging Within a Social Semiotic Perspective

One of the earlier definitions of code-switching is the use of “two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation” (Grosjean, 1982: 145). Despite this seemingly simple definition, the complexity of the term is reflected in the various distinctions that have been made between the terms code-switching, code-mixing, language alternation and translanguaging. According to Wei (1998), an alternation of languages at or above clause level would be considered code-switching, whereas alternation below clause level would be code-mixing. Concepts of code-switching, code-mixing and alternation might denote a deficiency in linguistic expression and represent a structuralist view.

On the other hand, the use of *language* as a verb (i.e. languaging; Swain, 2006), highlights the use of language as an activity in which people engage (Helm & Dabre, 2018). Drawing on the idea of languaging, *translanguaging* (García, 2009; Wei, 2011) focuses on how bilingual or multilingual speakers draw on all the resources that make up their “complete language repertoire” (García & Wei, 2014: 22). In a world of complex *translingual practices* (Canagarajah, 2013) taking place both face-to-face and online, translanguaging connotes meaning-making through a range of resources within a person’s semiotic repertoire. Therefore, translanguaging investigates speakers’ switches between “diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah, 2011: 401). This latter approach to L1 use is adopted in this study, which is also congruent with the multimodal, social semiotic approach to language and language learning.

Although in the present study L2 is a foreign language (as opposed to second language in a bilingual or multilingual community), our social semiotic understanding of signs and sign-making is commensurate with the concepts of translanguaging, multimodality and cultural tools for three reasons. First, translanguaging focuses on the multilingual speaker and treats each language as an element of the speaker’s semiotic repertoire. Second, social semiotics explores the distinct affordances of modes for sign-making. Within a multimodal approach (Jewitt, Bezemer & O’Halloran, 2016), speech is an affordance of the verbal mode and has distinct characteristics compared with the affordances of the visual mode. From this perspective, the process of meaning-making can be seen as an *orchestration of modes* (Norris, 2004) within a *modal ensemble* (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). Third, semiotic resources available in different modes are culturally shaped tools (including language, gestures, and artefacts) and “meaning-making is always productive and transformative, reflecting a unique accumulation of socially shaped experience” (Bezemer & Kress, 2016: 11).

Social Presence in Videoconferencing

Online communication transpires within a technological socio-semiotic landscape and each type, such as asynchronous written communication (email) or synchronous audio-visual communication (videoconference), manifests distinct potentials and constraints, and entails diverse affordances to foster social presence. The term *social presence* was coined to explain how people experience presence in lean media, such as telephone conversations (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976). However, more recently, it has

described presence in online educational settings. As a component of the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000), it is an essential element of educational experience, and is defined¹ as “the ability of learners to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry.” (Rourke et al., 1999: para.1). In online language learning contexts, social presence is a critical factor in supporting community building, collaboration, and thus learning (Walker, 2017b).

Within this framework, social presence has three dimensions: affective, interactive, and cohesive. While affective communication involves expression of emotions, use of humour, and self-disclosure, the interactive dimension is operationalised by indicators for continuing interaction, quoting from and referring to others’ messages, asking questions, complimenting and expressing appreciation, and expressing agreement. The cohesive dimension is characterised by employment of vocatives, inclusive pronouns, phatics, and salutations. Rourke et al. (1999) identified these social presence indicators to analyse written interaction in online discussion boards, and the framework has been used in the analysis of audio chats (Walker, 2017b), and videoconference recordings (Satar, 2015)².

Although videoconferencing affords audio-visual communication, it only offers a two-dimensional moving image of the other speaker visible within the frame of the webcam (Guichon & Wigham, 2016; Guichon, 2017), and lacks sensations of touch and odour. Therefore, it lacks the physicality available in face-to-face interactions. Interactions via videoconferencing are also different from face-to-face interaction in terms of the *spatio-temporal frame* (i.e. the interactions occur in a third space without a physical context, and can begin and end instantaneously or abruptly; Bezemer & Kress, 2016: 26). Therefore, due to a lack of spatio-temporal continuity, the audio-visual affordances of videoconferencing and linguistic choices of the learners could become more prominent in establishing and maintaining social presence.

The Role of L1 Use in Computer-Mediated Communication

Most research explores the role of L1 in classroom interactions and “[m]uch less attention has been given to students’ out-of-class practices” (Hafner, Li & Miller, 2015: 441). A few studies that have explored L1 use in CMC interactions of language learners reported that instances wherein learners switch to L1 are scarce (e.g. Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017). L1 is predominantly resorted to when learners wish to express highly personal content, thoughts and feelings (Huang, 2004) and to encourage group cohesion (Hafner, Li & Miller, 2015).

One of the earlier studies on code-switching in CMC was conducted by Kötter (2003), who demonstrated code-switching as a resource that facilitates learning. In online text-based tandem language learner interactions, Kötter (2003) observed that participants alternated languages to compensate for a lexical need or to preclude conversation breakdowns and loss of contact with their exchange partner. Later, Zourou (2009) observed teachers’ use of L1 during corrective feedback episodes as a strategy to overcome reduced social presence in CMC. More recently, Tudini (2016) identified learners’ use of L1 as a “key interactional and learning resource” (p.15) which is employed for partnership and affiliation, particularly when confronted with the face-threatening act of corrective feedback.

Investigating translanguaging in a multilingual social community for English language learners on Facebook, Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez (2018) observed the group using their shared repertoire “for a variety of purposes such as audience design, relationship management, raising intercultural awareness, and establishing solidarity” (p.252). Similarly, Walker (2017b) demonstrated how e-tandem language learners using audio chats drew on L1 as a resource for community building. In a related study, Walker (2017a) investigated how learners constructed and projected social presence and identity positions discursively in a bilingual intercultural collaboration through audio and written CMC, and found evidence of translanguaging to mitigate behaviour which could be perceived as face-threatening, such as banter and teasing. She argued that while the shared expanded linguistic repertoire provided a context for learners to display their emerging identities, adoption of L1 for playful behaviour assisted in the formation of a trusting relationship and solidarity by building social connections.

Despite an overlap between social presence and the aforementioned roles of L1 use in CMC, the relationship

between the two is yet to be established. This study builds on author's previous work in the development of a framework for social presence in multimodal learner interactions via desktop videoconferencing (Satar, 2015) and demonstrates how L1 use as a semiotic resource interweaves with the three dimensions of social presence and is accompanied by other semiotic resources present in this online space.

Methods

This paper investigates L1 use for social presence in videoconferencing interactions collected as part of a larger study, which followed an exploratory case study approach (Creswell, 2007) within an interpretivist paradigm. It draws on the theoretical frameworks of social presence (Rourke et al., 1999), and translanguaging (García, 2009; Wei, 2011), as explained in the literature review. A multimodal social semiotic account (Bezemer & Kress, 2016) is offered because of (a) its focus on meaning-making within a social local context (as is the case in this study, in which videoconference interactions took place within a shared social, cultural, and linguistic landscape), and (b) its emphasis on multimodal semiotic resources and transformative engagement. While social semiotic analysis tends to be applied to textual materials, such as textbooks and adverts, it is also possible to use the framework to analyse interaction. As Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran (2016: 65) argue, "[t]he potential to produce an encompassing social semiotic account of both artefacts *and* interaction is particularly powerful for gaining insight into meaning-making processes and literacy practices."

Context and Participants

Ten first year undergraduate students (aged 19-22) participated in a larger study, through which data presented in this paper were collected. Participants were studying at English Language Teaching departments in three geographically distant universities in Turkey. The participants' English level was B1-C1, and their L1 was Turkish. They shared the same linguistic and, to some extent, cultural background because they came from different parts of the country with some local cultural differences. The participants did not know each other prior to the study. They were paired to engage in videoconferencing exchanges in English based on their availability for the interactions. Despite their shared native language, two of these pairs never switched to Turkish³. Therefore, data presented here come from the rest of the three pairs. These were Pair 1: Deniz (M) and Zeynep (F); Pair 2: Emre (M) and Osman (M); and Pair 3: Eda (F) and Ali (M). Pseudonyms are used throughout. Participation in the study was not graded, and took place in non-institutional settings.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Multiple sources of data were collected as part of the larger study including semi-structured interviews, background and post-session questionnaires, as well as recordings of videoconferencing interactions. This paper only draws on the latter, which took place, and was recorded using an online non-proprietary videoconferencing platform (ww.ooVoo.com⁴). Each pair partook in three to four videoconferencing sessions, each lasting about 40 minutes to an hour, comprising a total of 18 sessions of about 14 hours. The video data generated by the three pairs mentioned above comprised a total of 11 sessions of about 9 hours, which the micro-episodes in this paper come from. Each videoconferencing session was guided by an open-ended task on a variety of topics, including families, personalities, describing a dream room, and daily activities.

The first step for the analysis of video data included identification of all instances of L1 using Atlas-ti 7.0, a qualitative analysis software package. L1 use was operationalised both at intra-sentential and inter-sentential levels, and the length of L1 utterances varied; the shortest was a suffix added to participant names (see Table 1), while the longest was L1 use for task explanation (e.g. Extract 8). L1 use was minimal in the data set, thus yielding a small corpus.

The second step of analysis was then to choose the extracts for micro-analysis. In order to address the research questions (i.e. how are multimodal resources co-deployed during L1 use and what is the role of L1

use in establishing and maintaining social presence), extracts were identified wherein translingual practices involved (a) instances of transformation, transduction, and mimesis (Bezemer & Kress, 2016), and (b) categories of social presence⁵ (Rourke et al., 1999). It was possible to tag each instance of L1 use with more than one social presence dimension, which is explained in the final paragraph of each extract analysis, and demonstrated in [Figure 24](#). Instances of translingual practices which did not directly relate to the theoretical framework presented here were not chosen for detailed analysis. A representative sample of such instances can be found in the [Appendix](#).

This analysis yielded the set of occurrences presented in this paper that had a single example of mimesis ([Extract 2](#)), a few extracts involving a combination of transformation and transduction ([Extract 1](#)), and translingual practices that directly relate to indicators acknowledged in the social presence framework ([Table 1](#)). In the analysis section, the extracts are presented in sections that represent the prominent modes employed, which are cultural artefacts, facial expressions, gaze avoidance, and verbal forms of address.

To ensure trustworthiness, detailed accounts of analyses are provided to the reader with multimodal transcripts which follow Jefferson's (2004) transcription conventions. Second, once the extracts for analysis were identified, data were then reviewed by another researcher and both researchers were in agreement for extract selection. Third, feedback was obtained from other researchers on the micro-analysis of the extracts. Fourth, interviews with the participants, which were conducted as part of the larger study (reported in Satar, 2011), were at times drawn upon. For instance, Emre mentioned that L1 use for greetings ([Table 1](#)) increased trust and intimacy, and Eda reported that L1 use facilitated relaxation when required ([Extract 4](#)). However, this was not the case for all extracts and, due to limitations of space, interview data are not reported here.

Analysis

In this section, we demonstrate language learners' co-deployment of L1 and other semiotic resources before exploring how L1 use contributed to each dimension (affective, interactive, and cohesive) of the Social Presence Framework. The analyses are presented in four sections, which demonstrate L1 use as it contributes to the establishment and maintenance of social presence through deployment of (a) a variety of shared cultural artefacts, (b) facial expressions, (c) gaze avoidance, and (d) verbal forms of address.

Shared Cultural Artefacts

Three extracts will be analysed below to illustrate how L1 use is co-deployed with cultural artefacts (an L1 idiom, an everyday object, and a catch phrase from a popular sit-com) and serves a cohesive function for social presence by evoking a shared linguistic and cultural landscape, as well as an affective function by contributing to a friendly social environment, and finally, an interactive function by enabling meaning negotiation.

A Physical Artefact and Idioms

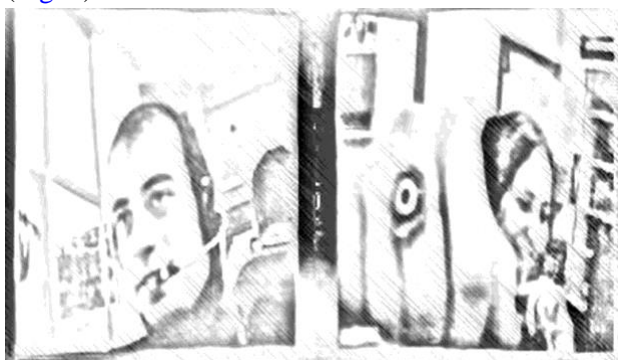
[Extract 1](#) is taken from the interactions between Zeynep (female) and Deniz (male) and occurs towards the end of their third and final session, by which time they had established a certain rapport and completed several tasks together. Upon task completion, there seems to be extended off-task talk. The extract is typical in terms of Zeynep's use of talk related to external artefacts to generate conversation, such as her use of a badge in the first session and a picture on her mobile phone in the second session. It represents processes of transformation and transduction as a physical artefact, an L1 idiom, and gestures are brought into the conversation.

[Extract 1.](#)

-
- Line 1 =Zeynep (Fig 1) Evil eye
=Deniz It's yours? ((rising intonation))
(Fig. 1)



- Line 2 Zeynep *Nazar değmesin* (Fig 2)
Touch wood (Fig 2)
((laughter))
(Fig. 2)



- Line 3 Deniz God bless me
((makes the sign of the cross followed by joint laughter))
(Fig. 3)



Line 4 Zeynep God bless me ((makes the sign of the cross))
(Fig. 4)



Line 5 ((joint laughter))
(Fig. 5)



In [Extract 1](#), Line 1, Zeynep brings her ring with an evil eye bead into the visual frame of the online space and represents a transduction process by producing the phrase “evil eye” in the verbal mode ([Fig. 1](#)). Line 2 then illustrates her attempt at the transformation of the English phrase by using a Turkish idiom (*Nazar değmesin*: Touch Wood) while still holding the ring in the visual frame ([Fig. 2](#)). In these two lines, Zeynep draws on L1, L2, and laughter in the verbal mode, as well as a cultural artefact (the ring) and her facial expressions in the visual mode to signify the playful use of the idiom. Following this, Deniz joins in the transformative process through both transformation and transduction of the L1 idiom. In the verbal mode, he transforms the meaning both linguistically and socio-culturally through the use of a Christian saying, God bless me. Deniz also chooses to express this sign in the visual mode with his gestures by crossing himself ([Fig. 3](#)). Through transformation and transduction, he seems to find it apt to express the meaning with these modal and translingual choices. In Line 4, Zeynep mirrors the L2 expression both verbally and visually ([Fig. 4](#)). Lines 3 and 4 generate joint laughter ([Fig. 5](#)). This reciprocation in dual mode could be interpreted as an indication of affective concurrence.

In this extract, given the social situatedness of the interaction in a predominantly Muslim country, the adoption of a Christian phrase and gestures does not seem to carry any religious connotation but is used as a resource to create a playful atmosphere through semiotic transformation and transduction of an L1 idiom. Moreover, the use of L1 stimulated by a cultural artefact does not seem to denote a deficiency in language, but a purposeful act to create a humorous atmosphere and a shared linguistic and cultural landscape. Therefore, it is possible to argue that L1 use in this extract constitutes a cohesive dimension by denoting a shared cultural understanding of the artefact and the idioms; an affective dimension by creating a collegial atmosphere; and an interactive dimension by serving as a topic or stimulus for further interaction in the target language.

A Media Artefact and a Catch Phrase

[Extract 2](#) comes from the end of the first session of the same dyad also during off-task talk, and represents

another cultural artefact that is incorporated in the conversation: A catch-phrase from a popular sit-com. The lines preceding this extract illustrated banter and playful language use, in which Deniz indicated that he would fight with Zeynep's boyfriend if they came to visit him together. This was projected and perceived to be humorous, as demonstrated by the laughter it generated. What follows is depicted in [Extract 2](#), which is marked by humour and banter based on shared knowledge of a popular TV sit-com. The extract demonstrates Zeynep's transformative engagement with a catch phrase from the sit-com through transformation (translation into L2) and mimesis (re-enactment by imitating the actor's gaze, gestures, and facial expressions).

Extract 2.

-
- Line 1 Zeynep Deniz, Deniz, I will fight you with my English knowledge ha? I will fight you with my English knowledge ([Fig. 6](#)) ((falling intonation, laughter, moves closer to the screen))

([Fig. 6](#))



- Line 2 Zeynep Do you know this *replik* from *Avrupa Yakası*?
(*Replik* is a line or catch phrase and *Avrupa Yakası* is the name of the sit-com.)

- Line 3 Deniz ([Fig. 7](#))hmm:? ((eyebrow raised))

([Fig. 7](#))



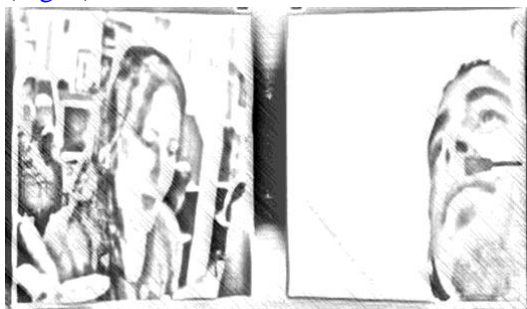
- Line 4 Zeynep ([Fig. 8](#))*seni hani şey err mesela*
([Fig. 8](#))you, well, you know err for example
([Fig. 8](#))
-



Line 5 Zeynep (Fig. 9) *seni var ya paramla döverim* ((laughter))

(Fig. 9) I can beat you with my money

(Fig. 9)



(Fig. 10)



Scene from the TV series, screenshot taken from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8dJUBMIMOA>

Line 6 Deniz ha:

(Fig. 11) ((joint laughter))



[Extract 2](#) begins with Zeynep's introduction and adaptation of a catch phrase from a popular Turkish TV sitcom. Referring back to Deniz's playful statement that he would fight with her boyfriend, Zeynep now suggests that she could fight back with her English. She says this twice in Line 1, second time with falling intonation and moving closer to the screen. As she observes Deniz's lack of appreciation of the joke signalled through his facial expressions ([Fig. 6](#)), she uses a comprehension check to test Deniz's knowledge of the catch phrase (*replik*) from the popular sit-com called "Avrupa Yakası" (Line 2). Here, as brisk meaning negotiation becomes a necessity, Zeynep uses Turkish words when required without attempting to search for an English equivalent. Following Deniz's reaction in Line 3 (non-linguistic feedback 'hmm?' and raised eyebrow [Fig. 7](#)), which demonstrates a claim for insufficient knowledge, Zeynep repeats the catch phrase in Line 5, following a false start in Line 4. This time she employs the processes of both transformation and transduction with L1 use in the verbal mode and embodied actions in the visual mode ([Fig. 8](#) and [9](#)). The visual mode denotes a process of *mimesis* as Zeynep impersonates the actress's gestures, manner of speech and gaze ([Fig. 10](#)). In Line 6, Deniz affirms his knowledge of the sit-com with an acknowledgement token (ha) and smiles ([Fig. 11](#)). Thus, when the translated catch phrase (into L2) fails to achieve the intended humorous effect, a comprehension check is offered. As Deniz's non-verbal feedback signals non-comprehension, L1 is then used to evoke humour accompanied by a bodily enactment of the phrase with gestures and intonation.

Intertextuality observed in [Extract 2](#) through reference to the media artefact (i.e. a sit-com catch phrase) underscores the shared cultural background and is used to evoke humour, thus increasing the cohesive and affective elements in this conversation. Moreover, L1 use and accompanying embodied resources in [Extract 2](#) are called on to communicate the meaning of the catch phrase. As such, the transformative processes observed in this extract predominantly contribute to the interactive dimension of social presence.

A Visual Representation of an Everyday Object

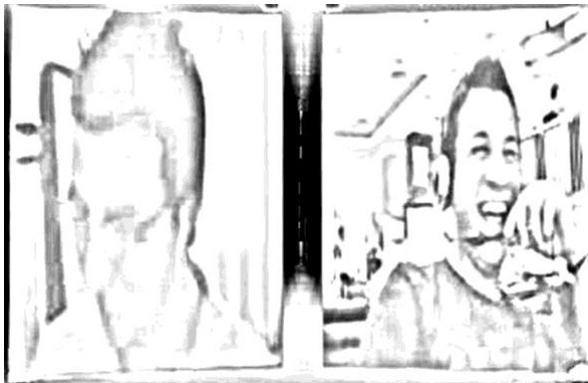
The third example of a cultural artefact that triggers L1 use comes from another pair: Osman and Emre. [Extract 3](#) below is taken from the third session of the pair (out of a total of four sessions) in which one of the participants describes their dream room while the other participant draws a picture of this room on paper, followed by a joint drawing activity on an online canvas. The artefact brought into conversation here is a religious calendar, which is a traditional Islamic wall calendar used in Turkey. The calendar pages include various pieces of information such as daily recipes, proverbs, religious extracts from the holy book and names for children, in addition to sunset, sunrise, and prayer times. Although it is a typical object of Turkish culture, it is a very unusual object in a young adult's dream room. The extract illustrates Emre's translingual practice as an apt choice representing a motivated sign to trigger humour observed both in the verbal and visual modes.

Extract 3

Line 1 Emre a calendar, a *diyanet* calendar (Fig. 12) ((laughter))
a calendar, a religious calendar
(Fig. 12)



Line 2 (0.4) ((laughter)) (Fig. 13) ((Osman leans forward to start drawing))
(Fig. 13)



Line 3 Osman Okay, I draw it too ((laughter))

Line 4 Osman That that's your dream room
((rising intonation, stress on the word 'dream', smiling voice))

Line 5 Osman Don't forget it

Line 6 (4.0) (Fig. 14)
((leaning forward, drawing))
(Fig. 14)



Line 7 Osman *Diyanet* calendar, okay
 ((falling intonation, slightly smiling voice))
 Religious calendar, okay

Line 8 (6.0)
 ((Osman drawing, diminishing laughter))

Line 9 Osman Okay, then

In [Extract 3](#), Emre is describing his dream room and Osman is drawing a representation of it on paper. In the first line, Emre asks Osman to draw a “*diyanet* calendar” (i.e. the religious calendar explained above). The phrase is employed to create humorous effect as represented in Emre’s intense laughter and smiling facial expressions (Lines 1 and 2; [Figures 12 and 13](#)). Although it is possible to translate the word *diyanet* as *religious*, the combined phrase ‘*diyanet* calendar’ signifies a specific cultural object, the meaning of which is socially and culturally situated. To elaborate, a general back translation of the word ‘religious’ would be *dini*; however, when used together with the word ‘calendar’, it no longer signifies the artefact referred to in this context. This is because humour introduced in this conversation does not come from the religiousness of the calendar, but from the fact that the type of calendar would be found in the houses of the elderly and not in young people’s rooms. Therefore, Emre’s employment of L1 as a semiotic resource to refer to this cultural artefact illustrates a motivated sign. Translanguaging (i.e. use of L1 for the first word in the phrase and the use of L2 for the second word) presents itself as an apt resource to signify the meaning and create the intended humorous effect where a full translation could fail to accomplish this within the given social and cultural landscape. Facial expressions in the visual mode and laughter as a non-linguistic verbal element also assist in the creation of humour and the motivated sign.

In this extract, Osman’s engagement with Emre’s playful language is evident in his transduction process of drawing the calendar on paper ([Fig. 14](#)) (thus transferring the verbal to visual mode), his emphasis on the word ‘dream’ (in Line 4), which underscores the irony and shows alignment with Emre’s joke, his laughter throughout the extract as well as his repetition of the phrase ‘*diyanet* calendar’ (Line 7) demonstrating acceptance and adoption of Emre’s semiotic choice. This prolonged sequence involves Osman’s drawing action and diminishing laughter until Line 9. In Line 9, he looks at the screen again and signals his readiness to continue with another item to be drawn, which marks the end of the joke.

In this extract, the choice to use L1 for one part of the phrase seems to fulfil predominantly an affective role by creating an immediate and warm atmosphere observable in the intense and shared laughter. Yet as the L1 word evokes certain cultural and social meanings that contribute to the *humorousness* of the phrase and denotes a certain meaning, it also seems to serve cohesive and interactive roles facilitating meaning negotiation within a shared cultural and social landscape.

Facial Expressions

[Extract 4](#) is taken from the fourth interaction of another pair, Ali (M) and Eda (F). In this extract, Eda is talking about the importance of sports in her life, during which she engages in a silent word search in the verbal mode. Through a visual representation of the word-search episode with her facial expressions (transduction), she holds the floor, and her L1 use assists in the resolution of the word-search as the meaning is then successfully expressed in L2 (transformation).

Extract 4

Line 1 Eda Sport is a very different thing

Line 2 Eda it's (Fig. 15)err (1.0)
(Fig. 15)



Line 3 Eda err: (Fig. 16)(3.0)
(Fig. 16)



Line 4 Eda how can I say (Fig. 17)
(Fig. 17)



Line 5 Eda (Fig. 18) *Sosyallesmenin en iyi yolu*
 (Fig. 18) It's the best way to socialise
 (Fig. 18)



Line 6 Eda It's a way of socialisation (Fig. 19)
 ((joint laughter))
 (Fig. 19)



Lines 2 and 3 demonstrate Eda's word search, which is expressed in the verbal mode through hesitation markers in lines 2 and 3 (*err*), speech in Line 4 and accompanying facial expressions and unfocused gaze (Figures 15, 16 and 17). While hesitation markers and use of speech illustrate Eda's active engagement with word search in the verbal mode, her facial expressions and gaze change in the visual mode demonstrate a process of transduction for word search. Ali, during this time, does not interrupt Eda or offer help. In Line 5, Eda reduces her distance to the camera and directs her gaze towards the screen (Fig. 18) and says in Turkish that playing a sport is the best way to socialise. She then quickly provides an English translation (transformation) and laughs, which is reciprocated by Ali. Right after this turn, she smiles, moves away from the screen with a relaxed posture and facial expression (Fig. 19).

In this extract, the transformative engagement with L1 and L2 seems to support Eda's ability to express herself in English. Once she uses L1 as a semiotic resource (Line 5), she is quickly able to produce an equivalent meaning in L2 and maintain interaction successfully. Thus, L1 use in the verbal mode here predominantly plays a role in supporting the interactive dimension of social presence, whereas Eda's expressive facial expressions indicative of a word search helps her sustain the floor. In this extract, there is

nothing humorous in terms of the content of the message, yet the use of Turkish, followed by a translation triggers joint laughter (Line 6). One way to interpret this could be the expression of relaxation or relief following an experience of frustration due to a prolonged episode of word search. Expression of such emotions both in the visual and verbal modes lends support for increased social presence, especially for the affective dimension.

Gaze Avoidance

Extracts 5 and 6 are also taken from Ali (M) and Eda's (F) interactions. Both extracts show how face-threatening acts are mitigated through engagement with multimodal resources: Verbally by using both L1 and L2 (transformation), and visually through the employment of gaze avoidance (transduction).

Extract 5 comes from the final conversation of the pair, and exemplifies Ali's reaction in Turkish towards his own grammatical mistake. Prior to this extract, Eda asks whether Ali likes listening to music. In response to this, in Line 1, Ali uses an L1 filler (*yani*), which triggers laughter, but as he tries to elaborate on his response in Line 2, he makes a grammatical mistake ("I don't interested"). In Line 3, Ali acknowledges his mistake by indicating his disapproval in L1 (*ay iğrenç oldu*) in the verbal mode and by looking up at the camera with a direct gaze in the visual mode (Fig. 20). He then offers a self-repair and immediately looks down avoiding gaze (Fig. 21), and they both laugh (Line 4). Translingual practices here help Ali save face by showing awareness and acknowledgement of his grammar mistake and by joint laughter upon self-repair.

Extract 5

Line 1 Ali I don't like, yani ((laughter, 4.0))

I don't like, I mean

Line 2 Ali I don't interested (1.0)

Line 3 Ali I don't (Fig. 20) ay iğrenç oldu

I don't (Fig. 20) ah, it sucks

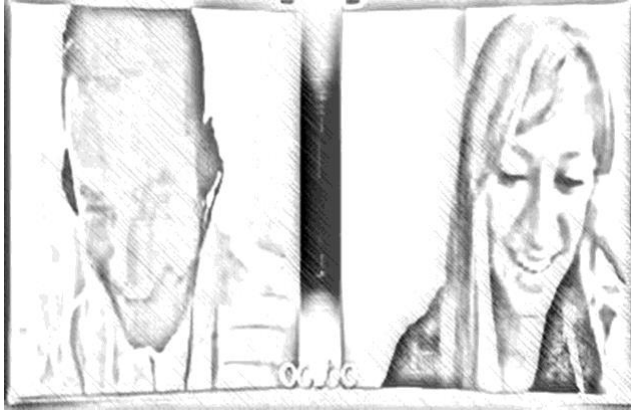
(Fig. 20)



Line 4 Ali I am not interested.(Fig. 21)

((joint laughter))

(Fig. 21)



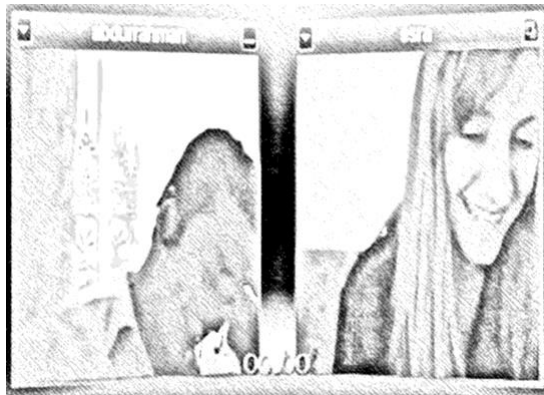
Similarly, [Extract 6](#) demonstrates the use of L1 to solicit self-initiated other-repair and a face-saving act in the visual mode. In this extract, Ali is describing his hometown, yet he is unable to remember certain words.

[Extract 6](#)

Line 1 Ali Tarsus is very good and

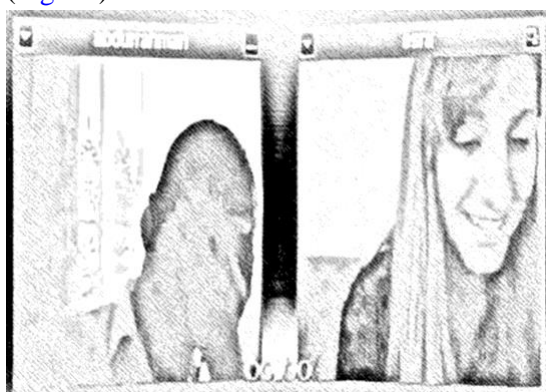
Line 2 Ali Very smart, smart *değil tabii, şirin neydi?* ((laughter))
Very smart, of course not smart, what was lovely?

Line 3 Eda lovely(Fig. 22)
(Fig. 22)



Line 4 Ali lovely *ilçe, ilçe ne?*
lovely county, what is county?

Line 5 Eda (Fig. 23)county
(Fig. 23)



In Line 2, through employment of L1, Ali shows his discontent for his word choice (*smart*) and requests other-repair for the L1 word ‘*şirin*’ (lovely). Similar to [Extract 5](#), acknowledgment of his linguistic deficiency in the verbal mode using L1 and asking for a reminder (Line 2) function as translingual face-saving acts. Moreover, the attempt to save face goes through a process of transduction and is also signified in the visual mode by a gesture of literally closing the eyes ([Fig. 22](#)), which is an attempt for gaze avoidance. This representation of face-saving in dual mode is repeated in the subsequent Line 4 and Line 5 as Ali asks for the L2 equivalent of another word and covers his face with his hand ([Fig. 23](#)).

Within the framework of social presence, L1 use in [Extract 5](#) and [Extract 6](#) represents attempts to invite other-repair to ensure continuation of interaction, while at the same time being employed as a resource to save face. Therefore, it is possible to argue that such L1 use contributes to both interactive and affective dimensions of social presence.

Forms of Address

This section offers evidence of how translingual forms of address in combination with vocatives (a cohesive indicator of social presence) are employed by Emre and Osman (participants from [Extract 3](#)). A special feature observed in the interactions of this pair was their use of a variety of forms of address. In Turkish, it is possible to indicate a warm and close relationship by addressing someone using words that indicate family relationships, when in fact the person is not related (such as uncle, aunt, brother), by calling the person ‘my friend’ or ‘mate,’ by using nicknames, or by adding a suffix (*-ciğim*) at the end of the person’s name (e.g. *Emreciğim*, *Osmancığim*). In Turkish, these forms, as well as phrases such as *my dear* are generally more common in interpersonal relationships than using given names, and tend to indicate the level of immediacy and closeness.

[Table 1](#). *Forms of address*

Session 1	Osman: Hi, Emre, how are you? ((flat voice))
Session 2	Osman: ... <i>arkadaşım</i> , <i>dur dostum</i> my friend, wait mate
Session 3	Osman: Hi <i>Emrocan</i> How are you? ((rising intonation, smile))
Session 4	Line 1. Osman: <i>Emreciğim</i> (.) good day! Line 2. Emre: <i>Buyur kardeşim</i> ((laughter)) Yes, my brother Line 3. Osman: How are you?

[Table 1](#) demonstrates several ways Osman and Emre addressed each other over four sessions. As their

conversations progressed, they employed more of the informal forms of address. For instance, in the first session, Osman addresses Emre with a vocative (i.e. his name); whereas in session 2, he opts for ‘my friend’ and ‘mate’ in L1 without an indication of a word search in either verbal or visual modes. In session 3, Osman addresses Emre with a nickname (Emrocan), which was the username of Emre on the platform. In L1, this nickname is produced by using another name, Can, as a suffix and inflicting the sounds in the real name to match the vowel harmony of Turkish grammar. Within the Turkish socio-cultural landscape, at the time of the study, young people used this combination to indicate a level of closeness. Osman had access to Emre’s username through the modal affordances of the videoconferencing system wherein participants’ names were present at all times as a written resource. Finally, in session 4, Osman adopts the L1 suffix – *cığım* and Emre responds with ‘my brother’ in L1. For the more immediate forms of address, the motivated choice to employ translingual practices using L1 words or L1 suffixes added to the vocative in salutations appears to be perceived as the most apt resource to establish and maintain immediacy here, playing a role predominantly in the cohesive dimension of social presence.

Discussion

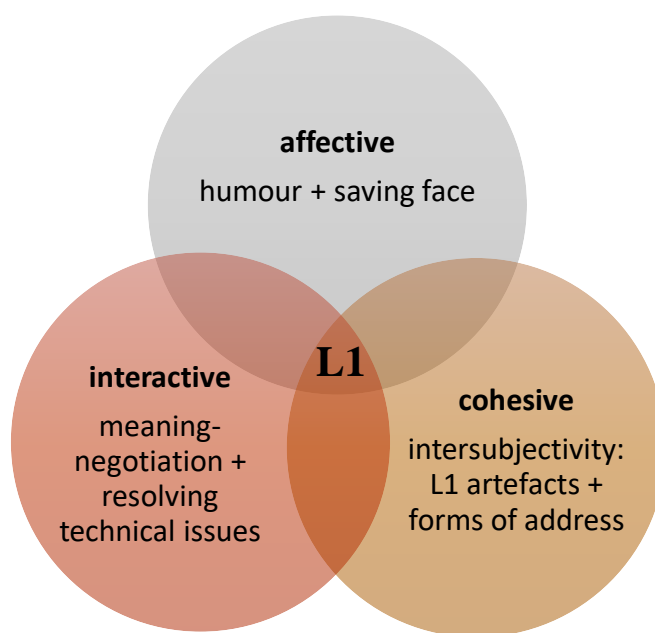
There is a growing research interest in the employment of semiotic resources available to online language learners and teachers, such as embodied resources like gaze and gestures, and other artefacts (Hampel, 2006; Lamy, 2012; Satar & Wigham, 2017). On the other hand, research on translingual practices such as L1 use as a semiotic resource, has been scarce (Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017). Therefore, this study explored how L1 and other semiotic resources are orchestrated in online language learner interactions via videoconferencing. The second question we addressed was the role of L1 use in the establishment and maintenance of social presence. Social presence is an important aspect of online learning because it supports social and emotional engagement among the participants. In online language learner interactions, L1 has been observed to preclude communication breakdowns (Kötter, 2003), assist in saving face during corrective feedback (Tudini, 2016), support community building (Walker, 2017b), and establish solidarity (Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez, 2018).

Through a multimodal social semiotic analysis, the findings of this paper identified several ways in which multimodal resources triggered, signalled, and augmented the use of L1 through processes of transformation, transduction, and mimesis. The first three extracts concentrated on cultural artefacts: A ring with an evil eye bead, the sign of the cross, enactment of a catch-phrase from a popular TV sit-com, and a visual representation of an everyday object. First, a unique ensemble of transformation, transduction, and multimodality was exemplified in [Extract 1](#) where a physical artefact (a ring with an evil eye bead) was introduced in the visual mode, which then went through a process of transduction via use of a Turkish idiom (*Nazar değmesin*: Touch wood). This was then followed by further transduction of the idiom by both participants, albeit not accurately, with the Christian gesture of the sign of the cross. This extract is a unique example of how learners can draw on shared multimodal, cultural, and linguistic background. Second, a media artefact was introduced in [Extract 2](#), in which one of the participants used an L1 catch phrase from a popular sit-com. As the transformation of the original L1 catch phrase into L2 failed to convey the target meaning, the participant engaged in a process of mimesis as she impersonated the actor’s gaze, gestures and facial expressions. Third, [Extract 3](#) demonstrated the use of L1 for one word in a phrase (*diyanet* calendar) to refer to a cultural artefact, wherein L1 was an apt choice representing a motivated sign to trigger humour. The participant’s facial expressions and laughter reinforced the humorous use as part of a collaborative task of describing and drawing a room. In all these extracts, the use of L1 to represent a cultural artefact, with or without an attempt to translate to or from L1, triggered mutual laughter expressed in both the audio and visual modes. As such, these findings corroborate arguments put forth by Walker (2017b), and Kulavuz-Onal and Vásquez (2018) that L1 use can assist in the establishment of a friendly social environment and intersubjectivity.

Moreover, [Extract 4](#) demonstrated how the non-linguistic, silent word-search also expressed through facial expressions (transduction) helped the learner to sustain the turn, and how L1 use supported the resolution

of word-search (transformation). [Extracts 5](#) and [6](#) illustrated the amelioration of face-threatening acts by employing both L1 and L2 (transformation) and gestures (transduction). These findings substantiate the mitigating role of L1 against face-threatening acts, such as corrective feedback (Tudini, 2016), and banter and teasing (Walker, 2017). They manifest further evidence on how multimodal resources are orchestrated during L1 use (Wei, 2011).

Regarding social presence, this paper demonstrated that various translingual practices were interwoven with the dimensions (affective, interactive, and cohesive) of social presence ([Figure 24](#)). In the current dataset, L1 was observed to play an essential role in all these dimensions, which were not necessarily mutually exclusive (i.e. a single instance of L1 was at times observed to corroborate affective, interactive, and/or cohesive dimensions, as illustrated in [Extract 1](#)). L1 use stimulated humour, generated a warm, friendly atmosphere ([Extracts 1, 2, 3](#)), and assisted in saving face ([Extracts 4, 5, 6](#)), and thus played an affective role. By helping resolve technology-related problems during interaction ([Extract 9](#) in [Appendix](#)), and encouraging meaning negotiation that ensured a smooth flow of interaction and prevented communication breakdowns ([Extracts 2, 4, 5, 6](#)), L1 played an interactive role. Finally, through inclusion of cultural artefacts of L1 in the form of idioms, everyday objects, popular media ([Extracts 1, 2, 3](#)), and forms of address ([Table 1](#)), use of L1 offered a shared repertoire of language and culture, bringing learners together on a common linguistic and cultural landscape, thereby serving a cohesive function.



[Figure 24](#). L1 use for social presence in videoconferencing

Conclusion

While providing maximum L2 input is still the goal in EFL teaching, recent studies endorse an informed, planned, and strategic use of L1 (Üstünel, 2016). This paper contributes to the knowledge base by demonstrating how L1 is used by language learners in videoconferencing as a social semiotic resource to support social presence.

This paper reiterates Wei's (2011) call for further multimodal research on the employment of L1 by focusing on how semiotic resources other than language can trigger, signal, or augment translingual practices. This small-scale, exploratory study attempted to respond to this call. Yet further research in the area is needed to improve our understanding of the multimodal nature of translanguaging, as well as the role of L1 use in establishing and maintaining social presence in online contexts. Walker (2017a) explored

translanguaging as part of identity positions and discursive construction of social presence in synchronous voice communication, whereas the online setting in this study comprised both audio and video interaction. There is certainly scope for future research exploring the relationships between L1 use and social presence in other online environments which afford a range of modes for meaning-making.

The main thrust of the argument here is that as a contributing factor to social presence, L1 use can assume a more prominent role in support of online language learning and teaching, where opportunities to establish strong interpersonal relationships are diminished. Therefore, translingual practices can assist learners in projecting themselves socially and emotionally into their online interactions and can open ways for learners to engage in a variety of transformative processes offering various learning opportunities.

For CMC to work effectively, it is desirable for participants to engage fully by employing all aspects of their communicative repertoire and all aspects of their multiple identities, one of which is their L1 identity. This paper has presented a means of exploring learner interactions via CMC, which reveals how users actively employ a range of communicative processes to create their own social world. Compared with the Deficit Model approach, which foregrounds what cannot be done or is missing in CMC, this approach is more beneficial in understanding complex social interactions and meaning-making processes. As we have shown, such an understanding can only be achieved through multimodal microanalyses, like the ones presented here.

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Notes

1. *Social Presence* is a contested term (e.g. Lowenthal & Snelson, 2017), which is criticised for its explanatory strength (see Öztok & Kehrwald, 2017). Other definitions of social presence exist (e.g. Kehrwald, 2010). In this paper, social presence is conceptualised following Rourke et al.'s (1999) framework.
2. See Satar (2015) for details of a framework of social presence enacted within language learner interactions through videoconferencing. Also, see Kern & Develotte (2018) for other recent research on social presence.
3. Although one would expect learners who share the same L1 to capitalise on their shared repertoire of abilities, some possible explanations of why this was not the case include the following: (a) language learners' do not frequently resort to L1 in CMC interactions (e.g. Adinolfi & Astruc, 2017), (b) L2 and other resources in videoconferencing might have been sufficient for meaning negotiation and in establishing a socio-emotional bond (see Satar, 2016), and (c) the interactions were being recorded for research purposes and these participants could have wanted to be "good informants," and (d) these two pairs were both same sex pairs (female), yet gender was unlikely to be a factor in this case.
4. ooVoo was discontinued in 2017.
5. Explanations and examples of the affective, interactive, and cohesive categories can be found in Rourke et al. (1999).

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Appendix. Other Common Uses of L1 as a Semiotic Resource in the Data Set

It is important to mention here that there were also instances where the participants relied on L1 for task explanations and planning as well as to resolve technical issues, such as audio and video lags:

- For task explanations and planning, L1 was used prior to task initiation in the form of a short dialogue (Extract 7) or a lengthy monologue (Extract 8)
- When used to indicate or overcome technical difficulties, L1 was sometimes accompanied by expressive facial gestures that showed frustration in the visual mode. (Extract 9)

These instances seemed to serve interactive roles in the establishment and maintenance of social presence, as they help participants continue the interaction by resolving technical or task-related issues. The modal affordances of videoconferencing also allowed participants to express emotions when such difficulties were encountered, potentially enhancing the affective dimension of social presence.

Extract 7

- Line 1 Ali *Şimdi önce biz mi çiziyoruz yoksa anlatıyoruz birbirimize mi çizdiriyoruz?*
Now, are we drawing first, or do we tell and let each other draw?
- Line 2 Eda *Çizdiriyoruz dream roomları.*
We are describing to each other to draw the dream rooms.
- Line 3 Ali *Hım, sen başla o zaman.*
Hmm, you start then.

Extract 8

- Line 1 Zeynep ((50 seconds of task explanation in Turkish.))
- Line 2 Deniz Okay, are you ready? Shall we begin?
- Line 3 Zeynep Yes, of course, all the time.

Extract 9

- Line 1 Eda Can you hear me this time?
- Line 2 Ali *Çok derinden geliyor*
Your voice is deep

Line 3 Eda *Hadi ya!* (11.00)
Really!

Line 4 Eda is it the same?(Fig. 25) (4.0)
(Fig. 25)



Line 5 Ali *Sesi açınca çok gürültü geliyor, kısınca seni duyamıyorum, karmaşık bir durum var.*
When I turn up the volume, there is lots of noise, when I turn it down I can't hear you,
it's a bit weird.

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